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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002892

SIPDIS

BAGHDAD PLEASE ALSO PASS TO MNF-I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2015

TAGS: PTER PREL ETRD MOPS EAID TU IZ US

SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: TIME TO RESTART TRILATERAL

U.S.-IRAQ-TURKEY TALKS

REF: A. ANKARA 242

1B. ANKARA 2314
1C. 04 ANKARA 6675
1D. STATE 85792
1E. ANKARA 2786

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request--please see para. 8.

12. (C) The United States engaged in trilateral talks with the Turkish and Iraqi governments on trucker security on Nov. 30, 2004 and on the PKK on Jan. 11 of this year. At both sets of talks--which were USG initiatives--all three sides agreed to meet after the formation of the ITG. Indeed, the Department recently instructed us (ref d) to pursue both trucker security and PKK trilateral talks with the GOT.

13. (C) The Iraqi DCM in Ankara told emboffs May 16 that Iraq stands ready to hold trucker security and PKK talks "anytime." And both we and the ITG face a credibility issue if we do not follow through on what we told the GOT we would do. We would not want such a gap to be a theme when PM Erdogan meets President Bush next month, especially given the President's previous assurances to Erdogan that Turkey will not face a terrorist threat from Iraq in the future.

From Trucker Security to Transportation Policy

14. (C) Our informal soundings with the Turks and the Iraqi Embassy suggest that we should expand the trucker security talks to cover Turkey-Iraq transportation issues writ large. This could include an open discussion of additional border gates, maximizing bridge flow, aviation, etc. This would serve USG interests by encouraging the Turks and Iraqis to cover these sometimes contentious issues with an eye toward resolution; we could play a support/mediation role if necessary. (NOTE: While the rate of Turkish drivers killed by insurgents has been significantly reduced from 2004, trucker security would still remain an important agenda item.
END NOTE.)

PKK Talks--Technical Only

15. (C) Per ref a, at the Jan. 11 PKK talks the three sides agreed to hold a technical experts meeting to discuss the current state of legal assistance agreements between Iraq and Turkey and outline extradition procedures to be used in the event PKK terrorists are detained by Iraqi authorities. Such a meeting would not necessarily require senior U.S. participation (though we would need a delegation which includes relevant legal expertise from Washington), and it would also serve to increase contacts and confidence between relevant Turkish and Iraqi officials.

16. (C) GOT officials have not pushed us hard to resume these talks, though likely for different reasons. Turkish trucker casualties in Iraq are down, and the Turks likely believe we have done all we can/will do to protect their citizens in Iraq. As for the PKK talks, the Turks are likely cynical given that we have not taken action against this terrorist organization, even as the Turks face an apparent PKK spring offensive (see ref b).

17. (C) Yet we should not allow these issues to drift. If we do, we hand the Turks additional opportunities to accuse us--and the Iraqis--of being indifferent to Turkish interests in Iraq (trucker security/transportation) and at home (PKK), putting our bilateral cooperation on Iraq (ground line of communication, tanker aircraft at Incirlik, and now the new logistics hub) at risk. We and the Iraqis must demonstrate our seriousness. At the same time, both these talks give the Iraqis an opportunity to engage this difficult--yet important--neighbor, the only democracy on Iraq's borders.

Action Request: Instructions, Please

18. (C) Embassy requests that Washington instruct Embassies Baghdad and Ankara to approach our respective governments to discuss near dates, venues (presumably Ankara or Washington), and notional agenda items for trucker security/transportation talks and PKK talks. Please bear in mind that these are separate talks and would require different participants from all three sides. The PKK talks should only focus on issues for legal experts: all three sides have already agreed on the political necessity to combat the PKK. MNF-I participation in the trucker security talks and broader PKK talks beyond the legal experts meeting will be essential.

19. (U) Iraq posts minimize considered.
EDELMAN